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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**CHINA: ENGAGEMENT OR CONTAINMENT** 

BY

COLONEL JOHN D. MILLS United States Army

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## USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

CHINA: ENGAGEMENT OR CONTAINMENT

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### **ABSTRACT**

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After Tiananmen Square, the United States unilaterally severed military to military contacts and many other activities with the People's Republic of China. Since that time, resumption of military to military relations and progress in other areas has been held hostage to repeated human rights and trade crises. More dangerously, political events, such as elections in Taiwan, have lead to military confrontation. The current course of Sino-U.S. relations may, as China increases its economic and military strength, lead to confrontation and a new Cold War. It is much more in the interests of the United States for China to become, perhaps a competitor, but also a responsible member of the world community. The strategy for reaching this end is engagement, maximum contact, to promote human rights and democratic ideals by persuasion instead of confrontation. Greater understanding will, in any case, defuse confrontation. The means to ensure the survival of a strategy of engagement is compartmentalization. Progress should be pursued in military engagement, trade, human rights, and political issues, but when difficulties arise in one area they should not be allowed to effect the other areas. Because of the importance of the PLA in China, military contacts, in particular, should be pursued regardless of other bilateral difficulties.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
HISTORY OF SINO-U.S. RELATIONS
CHINA - THE NEXT SUPERPOWER?
Economics
Military
Stability11
Ideology13
Superpower?14
CHINA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS14
U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS TOWARDS CHINA - ENDS16
ENGAGEMENT OR CONTAINMENT - WAYS?17
SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT PROPOSALS - MEANS
General 19
Military20
CONCLUSION21
ENDNOTES23
BIBLIOGRAPHY25

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Many analysts predict that between 2010 and 2020 China will surpass the United States as the largest economy in the world and may also have the largest and strongest military forces. China will be a super power, possibly the most powerful nation in the world. Given these predictions, it is appropriate to ask what security strategy the United States should pursue with China both now and in the intervening years. Is China destined to be a hostile competitor of the United States or a powerful but responsible member of the international system? Should U.S. policy toward China be one of containment or engagement?

While it will certainly be far more powerful than it is today, it is unlikely that China will, in 15 to 20 years, be truly equal to the United States as a super power or that it will be a compliant member of the international system, regardless of what strategy the United States pursues. However, a U.S. strategy of containment, implemented now, would guarantee a hostile China that puts an increasingly larger share of it resources into military modernization, precipitating another cold war that would not be welcomed nor affordable for either the United States or its friends and allies. On the other hand, a strategy of engagement, to include military engagement, might, if fashioned correctly, and not executed piecemeal, result in a powerful China that would disagree and compete with the United States on many issues but do so within the bounds of internationally acceptable behavior.

To determine if a strategy of engagement with China is appropriate and to make some specific proposals as to it implementation, some basic questions need to be answered. What is the history of Sino-U.S. relations? Will China be a superpower in 15

to 20 years? What are U.S. perceptions, national interests and domestic pressures with respect to China? What are China's perceptions, national interests and domestic pressures with respect to the United States?

#### HISTORY OF SINO-U.S. RELATIONS

Chinese leaders, and to a lesser extent, the Chinese people believe they are coming out of a 150 year period in which the western powers took advantage of and dismembered China, during a short, in relationship to its thousands of years of History, period of relative weakness. The United States, while not a major player in the early years, took part in this humiliation of China. U.S. support for China against Japan during World War II should have ameliorated any ill feeling, but it went primarily to the Nationalist government, bitter enemies of the present Communist regime. The continuation of that support in the subsequent civil war made the United States the premier world enemy of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC).

In the 1950s, Mao Zedong's China was clearly on the Soviet side in the Cold War, even fighting the United States directly in Korea. In the 1960s, China, driven by a Russian attitude that what is good for the Soviet Union is good for international communism, shifted to a policy antagonistic to both superpowers. However, the Cultural Revolution during the mid and late 1960s ended any coherent manifestation of this policy as China's leaders conducted an internal life-and-death struggle. The United States, embroiled in Vietnam, continued to see both the Soviet Union and China as the enemy.

In the early 1970s, as China began to emerge from its domestic conflict, international isolation, caused by the Cultural Revolution, combined with a Soviet

military buildup and border clashes, lead to a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> Nixon's visit lead to increased cooperation between China and the United States allowing the U.S. to push through an agreement for peace in Vietnam, temporarily acceptable to Hanoi, and concentrate, to the delight of China, on its true national interest, containment of the Soviet Union. Deng Xiaoping's rehabilitation and rise to power, after the death of Mao, lead to economic reform and a foreign policy even more supportive of the United States.

In the mid 1980s, President Reagan's statements of support for Taiwan and the rise of reform minded Mikhail Gorbachev, moved China to a more centrist, independent posture, very popular in the third world. By this time, however, the thaw in relations with the U.S. had produced contact of all types to include military engagement. In the mid to late 1980s the United States and China exchanged high level military visits and observed each others training. U.S. ships began to call at Chinese ports and sales of "defensive" military technology to China were planned.<sup>3</sup>

China's harsh crackdown on the Tiananmen demonstrators in 1989 ended this early effort at engagement with China. On June 5th, President Bush ordered the Defense Department to suspend all military cooperation with the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). Other activities were also restricted. The leaders of the PRC anticipated a worldwide backlash, but thought it would be only months in duration. However, other world events changed the international situation. The fall of the Berlin Wall, Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe, and the break up of the Soviet Union ended the U.S. need to court China, regardless of its ills as an authoritarian regime, in order to contain Soviet expansionism.

The nations of the world became preoccupied with assistance to Eastern Europe and the now independent former Soviet states and with the Gulf war.

The Communist Party and government of the PRC faced a crisis of legitimacy with the collapse of worldwide communism. It was overcome, by taking actions to accelerate economic growth, pouring more resources into military and security forces, and changing the emphasis of official ideology from communism to nationalism. Criticisms of the authoritarian system in China were portrayed as imperialistic interference with Chinese internal affairs, tantamount to the western actions in the 19th and early 20th century. U.S. pressures were portrayed as attempts to gain hegemony in Asia at China's expense.

After Desert Storm, the United States had difficulty arriving at a post-Cold War foreign policy in general and a China policy in particular. China policy in the Clinton administration became dominated by successive special interest groups; human rights, trade, and pro-Taiwan. Despite the fits and starts over MFN status and other issues, engagement began to increase in 1994, including some high level military exchanges and the first U.S. Navy ship visit since Tiananmen.<sup>5</sup>

Then on June 7, 1995, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui entered the United States on a private visit. This struck at one of China's vital interests, the "one China" policy. Perceiving conspiracy, rather than an ill-defined foreign policy, the PRC withdrew a military delegation from the U.S., canceled a pending visit by Defense Minister Chi Haotian, postponed bilateral consultations on missile and nuclear issues, declared a pending visit by the director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament

Agency "inconvenient," recalled its Ambassador to the United States, and postponed a high-level meeting with Taiwan officials. Other unofficial retaliation followed: factories pirating compact disks were reopened, dozens of dissidents were rounded up, and a mobile ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to the U.S. was test fired.

In the spring of 1996, the PRC fired ballistic missiles into the sea at both ends of Taiwan, while conducting extensive military exercises just across the strait, apparently in an attempt to influence elections in Taiwan. The United States responded by deploying two carrier battle groups in the vicinity of Taiwan. The degree of U.S. response seemed to surprise China just as the degree of the PRC response to President Lee's visit surprised the U.S.

Sino-U.S. relations seemed to be nose-diving, but lessons were learned. The U.S. learned that Taiwan is a vital national interest for China will. The PRC learned that although the United States supports the concept of one China, The U.S. is resolved that the current split of Taiwan and China must be resolved peaceably. Both sides saw the need to improve relationships and in the last few months a number of significant high level exchanges have occurred. It is time, while both sides are reacting positively in the aftermath of the Taiwan crisis, for a coordinated U.S. policy of engagement with China. A fragmented policy may be misunderstood and lead, against the interests of either country, to a policy of containment.

# CHINA - THE NEXT SUPERPOWER?

Popular media, many in government, and some scholars have already declared that China will be the next superpower, pointing to its huge population, over a decade of double digit economic growth, and the beginnings of military modernization. But will it be? To have worldwide influence, such as the Soviet Union or United States had after World War II, requires a combination of tremendous economic and military capability with a stable society and moral and ideological appeal that China is unlikely to duplicate.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Economics**

On the surface, China appears to be undergoing an unstoppable economic miracle. Annual growth from 1978 through 1995 averaged 9.5%. If the trend continued China's GAP would pass that of the United States before 2020. However, underneath the surface, cracks threaten if not collapse, substantial slowdown to repair economic foundations.

To a greater degree than in any other country since World War II, growth has been primarily a result of foreign investment in private enterprise. However, this has not lead to a reduction in state owned enterprise. Employment in state owned enterprises has increased over 50%, to more than 110 million, during this period, yet less than 50% of these enterprises show even a marginal profit. Two thirds of state investment capital is being poured into these unprofitable businesses through loans from state owned banks. Virtually none make payments on these loans. Interest does not even show as an expense on their profit and loss statements. Total debt of these enterprises now exceeds one fourth of China's GAP. State enterprise is in a sense a huge welfare employment system draining resources from more productive parts of society. Small township and village

collectives have accounted for most of China's growth in manufacturing, but while they are doing better than state owned enterprises, they also have overemployment and marginal profits.

The Chinese banking system is weakening. Most investment is funneled through one of four state owned banking systems. Loans, as a percentage of output from these banks, have risen from 20% to 70%, most to state owned enterprises. Much of the income is from two to five year savings programs promising to pay as much as 12% a year. Presently much of the interest paid is directly from new deposits, in what would in the United States be an illegal pyramid scheme, since the banks own investments are losing money. One major bank has already failed. A total collapse would be dwarf the recent U.S. savings and loan debacle.

Also of concern to the Chinese are 80 million rural people below the poverty line, 100 million people in transition, moving about, looking for a place to live, work and eat, an inflation rate approaching 20%, and an increasing gap between the average Chinese and the affluent.

Resolution of these problems will decrease investment capital and economic growth and leave little money for military modernization. Still, even if China does not become a true economic superpower, the combined assets of 1.2 billion intelligent hard working people will be substantial, forming perhaps the second or third largest world economy, and cannot be ignored.

# Military

To be a true superpower China needs a large, well trained military, with modern weapons, capable of power projection. It has a large military, 3 million men plus a 1 million strong paramilitary People's Armed Police (PAP) and 1.2 million reserves, but one that in terms of weaponry, training and tactics is essentially Korean War-vintage, with a thin semi-modern facade. Still, China has shown the capability in the past, such as in the development of its nuclear missile forces, to rapidly modernize, given the resources and political will. However, it appears to have neither in sufficient amount to create a modern, much less information age military.

When Deng Xiaoping began China's modernization, military modernization was intended to be the last phase. Defense expenditures remained low until the mid 1980's. Then from 1986 to 1994 the PLA's official budget increased 159%, but high inflation in this period of rapid economic growth reduced the increase in real terms to about 4%. The present official defense budget is about \$7.5 billion. The actual budget is probably about four times as much, drawn from hidden allocations and military earnings from commercial enterprises. This \$30 billion is not a great amount to sustain an active force of 4 million (PLA and PAP), and fund a general modernization. Japan by contrast spends about \$54 billion on a much smaller, but more modern, force. Much of China's military expenditure increases have gone into salaries and quality of life, to combat low morale of officers on fixed incomes, not profiting from the economic growth so visible around them. One million men have already been cut from the military structure, and a

reduction of another 500,000 is planned, as the PLA attempts to find money for modernization.

The PLA has developed a new doctrine as a basis for its modernization. Initially its doctrine was to fight a "peoples' war," drawing an enemy in to his culminating point and then defeating him. The army was deployed regionally to facilitate this strategy and to provide internal stability. During the late 1980s the doctrine was "limited war." This war called for ground forces fighting in a geographically small area, using combined arms tactics, all available weapons, and good command, control, communications and intelligence systems. This seemed to fit events elsewhere in the world and China's own experiences of border wars with India, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam. Small scale guerrilla war was also considered possible. Training and force structure were oriented towards this doctrine.

The Gulf War caught the Chinese by surprise. They expected the U.S. to become bogged down against Iraq. Instead they were shocked by the swift and complete U.S. dominance.

The PLA was forced to confront the elements of modern warfare: precision-guided munitions; stealth technology; electronic countermeasures; precision bombing of military targets with minimized collateral damage; airborne command and control systems; in-flight refueling; the minimum loss of aircraft and life; the use of satellites in anti-ballistic missile defense, strategic targeting, and intelligence gathering; early warning and surveillance; the use of command centers half a world away; the use of anti-ballistic missile defense; massive airlift and rapid deployment capability; the ability of troops to exist in desert conditions; the use of special operation commando squads; and so on. 12

The new PLA doctrine is "limited war under high-technology conditions" and "active defense." There has been increased attention to all aspects of a modern force and

modernization has been targeted at the PLA Navy and PLA Air Force. However, intentions are not capabilities. The PLA has consistently failed to demonstrate the capability to develop its own high-technology weapon systems such as advanced fighters. It is dependent on buying abroad, but does not have the money for large scale purchases. It has ordered 48 modern fighters and 10 bombers from Russia as a short term fix, but delivery may be delayed on some, and one wing is not an Air Force. The long range solution is the doubtful attempt to reverse engineer an F16 like aircraft, that even if successful will result in the fielding of an aircraft 15 years out of date in seven or eight years. The PLAAF has no aerial refueling or airborne early warning or control systems.

The PLAN is having more success in building modern destroyers and frigates, but can afford so few that a true blue water capability is years away. Plans are made annually for an indigenous aircraft or helicopter carrier and shelved. There is not enough money or the technology to build it, and no aircraft to put on it. The PLAN is buying a few top of the line Kilo class diesel submarines from Russia, which will worry any potential adversary and let it project power locally but you cannot seize terrain with submarines.

The PLA is designating a few of its ground divisions FIST units and providing them additional equipment and training, but little is truly modern. Attempts at joint warfare training are little more than the appearance of aircraft in the same area as ground maneuvers. The PLA also has nothing like an NCO corps, a western military schools system, or the equivalent of a National Training Center or Battle Command Training Program to test its units against the best possible OPFOR.

In short, nothing in existence or planned now is a threat to a large advanced force such as the United States has. True military modernization will have to await the distant realization of economic success and much greater technical sophistication. It will not happen by 2010 and probably not for at least twenty years beyond. Even Chinese analysts, assuming no major problems ahead, do not predict parity with the U.S. before 2040 or 2050.

This does not mean we can ignore China. Barring the unlikely event of collapse, China will certainly be a regional power, perhaps the greatest in Asia, and will have a limited power projection capability. A powerful hostile China would lead to great instability throughout Asia. A China that perceived the U.S. pursuing a policy of containment might risk its economic development today to more aggressively pursue military modernization, and be more powerful and hostile in the future.

#### Stability

China is basically stable at this time, but there is much underlying potential for instability. In addition to the economic and population factors already discussed, there is a strong movement demanding more economic freedom. Tiananmen square was a demonstration for economic, not political, freedom, the right to choose your own job or change jobs, wages, etc. It was suppressed because outside the square and in other cities it was leading to lawlessness and vigilantism. Those forces still exist. They are exacerbated because a generation of Chinese population control measures (one child per family leading to aborting or killing of female babies) has created a huge surplus of young men with no marriage prospects. Young single men are the population group most

easily pushed into rioting and violence. The government and the communist party are playing a balancing act of moving economic reform forward but not losing control. They will not allow themselves to be thrown out, or voted out, of power.

Corruption also hurts stability. China has rampant corruption at all levels of government and the military. Despite concerted efforts against them, bribery, fraud, embezzlement and even smuggling on a large scale indicate leaders at all levels have not bought into the PRC and PLA leaderships vision.

Another factor encouraging instability is the fall of worldwide communism. This threatens the legitimacy of the government of the PRC. The response has been an official revival of Chinese nationalism. Themes include; ending one hundred fifty years of shame, the U.S. seeks hegemony, foreign pressures are interference in internal affairs, and defending (regaining control of) historical Chinese territory. This is interesting because History suggests that nations in economic transition tend to be assertive externally. If China's economic miracle falters, or if a new economic elite threatens party control, an aggressive foreign policy, designed to reinforce nationalism and gain support of military hard-liners, is likely.<sup>13</sup>

If, as many hope, economic transformation leads to political transformation in China, there is additional cause for concern. There also appears to be a strong correlation between transition from authoritarianism to democracy and the incidence of war, again because the old leaders see their power base diminishing and seek to reinforce it through nationalism and an appeal for military support. China is showing no signs of a true democratic movement at this time, but if one rises as economic progress falters, the

combination would be viewed as deadly by the current regime and any risks taken to stop it would be justified.

Nationalism could work against stability in other ways as well. China has large, not ethnically Chinese, populations on many of its borders. Nationalism in these groups, particularly among Muslim ones, could lead to separatist movements.

China is not about to fall apart. The current regime is in control. Succession from Deng Xiaoping will be to strong nationalists, committed to keeping the party in power, and enjoying the support of the military. Instability and corruption in many other developing countries has been much worse without loss of power. If instability truly becomes threatening, the leadership will become more authoritarian, not step down. However, China does not have the kind of internal stability needed to make it a viable model and long term ally for other countries.

# Ideology

China has no ideology to advance that will transcend the importance of the daily issues settled by diplomatic means. Communism no longer has worldwide appeal and Chinese nationalism is a liability internationally, rather than an asset. If China succeeds in an economic revolution while maintaining an authoritarian government it will be a pattern that appeals to many developing countries but hardly an ideology inspiring a following. Similarly, if China is able to function diplomatically as an equal with other great powers without being "co-opted" by the West, it will have some international appeal, but not an ideology, as a leader of a new non-aligned movement. Many of the

nations China might appeal to, particularly Islamic ones, will simultaneously be concerned about China's godlessness and stance on issues such as abortion.

# Superpower?

China's underlying economic problems, inability to modernize its military, potential instabilities, and lack of an ideology with worldwide appeal, ensure it will not become a superpower by 2020. It is however, already a regional power and will no doubt be a greater one. As such the United States cannot ignore it. Its potential effect on the Asia Pacific region, the fastest growing economic sector of the globe, is too important. We can either engage China, and try to make it a responsible member of the world community, or we can write it off as incorrigible and attempt to contain it.

# CHINA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

China's national interests are tied in with the interests of the current rulers in China which include maintaining themselves and the communist party in power. The paramount requirements to maintain themselves in power are continued economic growth and stability. As mentioned the current government, in order to overcome the crisis of legitimacy brought on by the collapse of worldwide communism, is emphasizing nationalism. This emphasis increases the importance of some traditional Chinese interests. The current leaders are committed to reversing one hundred fifty years of shame. Implicit in this is avoiding foreign interference in "internal affairs," defending claims to all traditional Chinese territory, and developing an economy and military that will ensure China "is not pushed around any more."

The key to dealing with China will be to understand when what appears to be recalcitrant or aggressive behavior is defensive from China's point of view, and work through it slowly. For example, international agreements on intellectual property (a Western, not Asian, concept) or human rights may be seen as internal interference, and will be accepted only if China sees a larger self interest. From China's viewpoint, most international norms were developed by western states for their own benefit.

Similarly, China might resort to force, if possible, to prevent Taiwanese independence or hold its claims in the Spratleys, but would consider it defensive. This is traditional Chinese territory torn away during the years of shame. China must modernize its military if it is going to assert its rights in these areas, but will consider this modernization defensive. In fact, while China has fought more border wars than any other country in the last forty years, it has not attempted to march into some neighboring country's capital. These wars have been in "defense" of Chinese territory.

A final Chinese interest is to avoid contamination of western culture. This ranges from violence, drugs, and prostitution to lack of respect for elders and to democratic (destabilizing) ideas. China's challenge is to obtain western knowledge (economic and technical) without adopting western ways. Our challenge is to offer China what it will easily accept, but avoid the "hard sell" or confrontation in other areas, which may make China disengage. The "soft sell" and time will work for us, since China cannot open up economically and technologically without exposure to ideas.

# U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS TOWARDS CHINA - ENDS

It is clearly ultimately in the U.S. national interest (Ends) for China to become a responsible member of the international community. This will ensure stability in East Asia and enable continued trans-Pacific economic growth and trade. It is not a U.S. interest to have a hostile China. A hostile China could destabilize the region. It would spend more on armaments (which might create internal economic instability) than one that does not feel threatened, forcing the U.S. to increase military spending to maintain presence, the technological edge, and stability in the Asia Pacific area. Neither a new cold war or arms race is in the interest of either government.

It is not in the U.S. interest to have an unstable China. Instability could extend beyond China's borders. Tens of millions of international refugees, instead of the hundreds of thousands experienced in other areas, would be a real possibility. External aggression to seize disputed territories could occur. An embattled government might become ultra-nationalistic and aggressive in an effort to salvage its legitimacy.

It is in the U.S. interest, as an ideological world leader, to promote democracy and human rights, but not to the extent of ending all dialogue and progress with China in other areas, or pushing China towards instability or hostility. Incremental progress is okay, and it does not have to be a western model. Discouraging an attack on a democratic "country," Taiwan, is in consonance with our interests. Encouraging its official independence is not.

Similarly, it is in the U.S. interest to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems technology, but setbacks in this area should not be

allowed to impede our larger goal of encouraging China to become a responsible member of the world community.

# **ENGAGEMENT OR CONTAINMENT - WAYS?**

Some writers have discussed engagement and containment as if they are the strategic "Ends" in our relation with China, perhaps because during the Cold War, containment of communism became an end in itself. No one was certain it would actually roll back the "iron curtain." However containment or engagement are not "Ends" but "Ways," a strategy for reaching the U.S. national interest of a China that is a responsible member of the international community. Which "Way" is most likely lead to that "End?"

While we cannot be sure that an engagement strategy will lead to our goal, we can be sure a containment strategy will not. Containment is both an admission of failure and a self-fulfilling prophesy. Current Chinese ideology is nationalistic and suspicious of the West. China is already accusing the United States of seeking hegemony and containment of China. A containment policy, stated or not, would be confrontational enough to move everyone in China's leadership into the hard-line camp. China would feel forced to drastically increase military spending in "defense" and reach out to anyone hostile to the U.S. (Iran, Iraq, Cuba, n Korea). This would threaten China's economic growth and create instability which in turn would drive the current regime to more strident nationalism and an even more aggressive foreign policy. It would force the United States to increase military spending and presence in East Asia. We would lose any potential for

assistance in combating the spread of WMD, restraining north Korea, or influencing human rights and democratic tendencies in China.

Finally, the threat does not justify giving up on China. China is not a few years away from becoming a superpower. It is decades, perhaps fifty years away, if it ever gets there. We have time to try engagement, for at least a decade, and still maintain our "edge" if containment ultimately becomes necessary

The prospect for success of a policy of engagement is dependent on the ability of the U.S. to develop a clear plan and willingness to follow it, and China's willingness to reciprocate. China, although suspicious of the United States, has two clear interests in a policy of engagement with the U.S. The first is economic. The Chinese economy cannot continue to grow without increasing interdependence with the world and the largest economy in the world.

The second is military. China desperately wants to develop a technologically sophisticated military and the ability to synchronize and use it. It can get some of the technology elsewhere, perhaps from Russia, but as "Desert Storm" proved, only the United States has the highest technological capabilities and the ability to integrate them across the battlefield. The recent visit of Lieutenant General Kui Fulin to the United States underscored this message. The visit was not canceled despite the death of Deng Xiaopeng just before LTG Kui's departure. At every opportunity during the trip LTG Kui pushed engagement and the Chinese need to learn from the United States, while emphasizing the essentially defensive nature of the PLA.

The United States and China, despite their differences, both seek engagement, but for different reasons. The United States hopes, over time, to change attitudes in China. China hopes to learn the use of military technology from the United States. From these differing but converging interests it is possible to craft an acceptable engagement policy. Each country will get some of what it wants, but not everything. The process will, however, make the next round of engagement easier and the need for containment less likely. It is also possible that through this process enough people in each country will begin to understand the other that we can avoid major diplomatic and military crises, such as the Taiwan Straits, in the future.

# SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT PROPOSAL - MEANS

#### General

Engagement of China should proceed simultaneously in multiple areas, political, economic and military; bilateral and multilateral. An overarching strategy is necessary to ensure no agency loses sight of the long term objective of China as a responsible member of the international order, but the tactics in each area of engagement should be compartmentalized. Except in rare circumstances, progress in one area should not be held hostage to difficulties in another. This jeopardizes the long term strategy for tactical gain.

The public engagement process needs to be less confrontational, although this may play well in some domestic circles, and more Asian. Develop the relationship; help China achieve some of its goals to put it in psychological debt; search for middle ground and consensus; publicly praise China for the good things it is doing, then ask for favors. Instead of putting obstacles up, why not pave the way for China to join the World Trade

Organization, take the credit, and encourage change. The standards on issues such as intellectual property rights that the U.S. is demanding of China prior to WTO membership are more stringent than what we expected from Korea or Taiwan at similar points in their economic development. The U.S. could publicly, and often, complement the Chinese for the incredible progress they have made ensuring 1.2 billion people have the most basic rights of food and shelter before suggesting a more open attitude towards religion.

### Military

Military engagement has the potential to pay the most dividends because the Chinese military has been the source of some of the most acrimonious comments towards the United States and because China desperately wants to obtain technology and the ability to use it. The U.S. wants to change Chinese attitudes. China wants U.S. technology. A good beginning would be cross-training activities and unit exchanges. This will give China access to how the U.S. operates in a high-tech environment, if not the technology itself, and give the United States access to Chinese soldiers and officers at all levels. It is essential, as important as they are for setting direction, to move beyond three and four star visits. Any relationships developed at that level will last only a few years. The United States needs to develop relationships with the field grade officers who will influence Chinese policy for ten to twenty years. Invite some to attend our Command and Staff and War Colleges.

In time it will be necessary to provide some technical capabilities to China to keep the interest in the relationship. This is low risk, China cannot afford to buy and field a

truly modern force, but it will pay huge dividends in good will and continuation of the exchange programs.

The United States needs to ensure that news of the growing military relationship reaches across the PLA. American military forces engaged across the region cannot directly impact 2.5 million soldiers. Media can make a difference. If China does not choose to publicize bilateral military events internally, the U.S. will have to do it, much as it recently publicized USCINPAC's budding relationship with the Russian Far East Military District, via a special edition of the <u>Asia-Pacific Defense FORUM magazine</u>.

USCINCPAC and China could develop a Colonels steering group with the PLA, modeled after the one with Russia, which would ensure continuity of engagement programs and serve as another vehicle of engagement. The exact method of military engagement is not as important as getting a program going while willingness exists on both sides.

### **CONCLUSION**

United States relations with China have been poor due to Tiananmen Square, misunderstandings about Taiwan and a U.S. foreign policy held hostage by special interests, but a hostile China is not inevitable. The opportunity exists to chart a new course of engagement with China. The risks are few because, however much China gains, it is unlikely to be a superpower peer of the United States for decades, if ever. The potential benefit is a China which is a responsible member of the world system and a force for stability in Asia. Failure to take this course will convince China that the U.S. is

attempting a strategy of hegemony and containment, leading to a hostile China, an arms race, and potential instability.

Carpe Diem

#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Robert G. Sutter, <u>Shaping China's Future in World Affairs: The U.S. Role</u> (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College SSI, 1996),2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Jer Donald Get, What's With the Relationship Between America's Army and China's PLA (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College SSI, 1996), 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Sutter, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Although the PRC allowed the ship visit, it was set in Qingdao, not a major port such as Shanghai, and news of it was blacked out from the rest of China.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> David Shambaugh, "The United States and China: A New Cold War?" <u>Current History</u> 94 (September 1995): 241,242.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> David Shambaugh, "Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses," <u>International Security</u> 21 (Fall 1996): 188.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Nicholas R. Lardy, "China's Economic Transformation." Manuscript prepared for U.S. Army War College Annual Strategy Conference (Carlisle Barracks, PA: April 1996), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, <u>National Security: Impact of China's Military Modernization in the Pacific Region</u> (Washington: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1995), 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> David Shambaugh, "China's Military: Real or Paper Tiger," <u>The Washington Quarterly</u> 19 (Spring 1996): 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> John W. Garver, "Will China Be Another Germany?" Manuscript prepared for U.S. Army War College Annual Strategy Conference (Carlisle Barracks, PA: April 1996), 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," <u>Foreign Affairs</u> 74 (May-June 1995): 87.

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